



**Racing
Victoria**

Please find following a statement from Racing Victoria to ABC 7.30 on 17 October 2019 in response to questions tabled with Racing Victoria on 16 October 2019 seeking a written response:

Statement to ABC 7.30

Racing Victoria is focused on developing and delivering world-leading equine welfare practices and is committed to ensuring that thoroughbred racehorses are afforded the appropriate care and attention before, during and after racing. The welfare of our horses and participants is central to our strategic framework and is a non-negotiable for Racing Victoria.

To support this, an industry-wide three-year equine welfare strategic plan was released by Racing Victoria this year after consultation with industry stakeholders and animal care and protection groups. The strategic plan covers six key pillars in governance and standards; population dynamics; racing; post-racing; industry culture and industry reputation.

This strategic plan has been developed and is being driven by a new standalone equine welfare unit that Racing Victoria has established. The retention of one percent of all Victorian prizemoney for equine welfare programs underpins a combined annual investment in integrity, veterinary services and equine welfare by Racing Victoria of close to \$15 million.

We are of the view that there is a home for every healthy thoroughbred retiring from racing and our highly regarded *Off The Track* program helps create and support opportunities for retired racehorses in a variety of careers after racing.

That said, all horse owners have the responsibility to recognise when euthanasia is the best decision for the welfare of a horse. An injury that can't be treated, a disease-causing pain and suffering, old age or any other situations reducing a horse's quality of life are all circumstances to consider euthanasia which can be legally carried out by a veterinarian or a knackery representative, either on-site or at another location.

Racing Australia publishes data on the national retirement statistics within its Annual Report. As the custodian of the national retirement data, it advises that 90 per cent of Victorian racehorses are entering the equestrian, pleasure or breeding sectors upon their retirement and that one per cent are sent to abattoirs.

Having introduced the retirement rule in 2014, Racing Australia, has expanded the national rules in recent years to include the early registration of foals and owners to strengthen the traceability of thoroughbred racehorses from birth to retirement.

It is the responsibility of owners and trainers to appropriately transition their healthy thoroughbred from a racing career to its next owner, at which time it is then subject to the laws of the land as opposed to the national Rules of Racing. Racing Victoria's *Off The Track* program further supports the efforts of owners and trainers by creating demand and opportunities for thoroughbreds in equestrian and pleasure pursuits.

Since its inception in 2012, the *Off The Track* program has sponsored over 700 equestrian events featuring more than 15,000 retired racehorses. It also promotes a network of 50 retrainers to assist in the transition of a horse to a life after racing.

Racing Victoria has representatives attend livestock sales in Victoria to assist in the monitoring of former racehorses and to better understand their movement in the absence of a National Horse Traceability Register. Our evidence suggests that the majority of thoroughbreds entering mixed livestock sales in Victoria have been rehomed on multiple occasions or been retired from racing for an extended period.

Our newly launched equine welfare strategy has identified a need for a National Horse Traceability Register so that, among other things, we're better informed about the whereabouts of retired racehorses once they have left our jurisdiction and we can best support opportunities for them in their life after racing.

Whilst difficult for Australia to achieve given the diversity and volume of all breeds, Racing Victoria supports calls for the introduction of a National Horse Traceability Register to develop a national approach to the management of horse ownership and whereabouts.

Within Victoria, the operation of knackeries and abattoirs falls under the guidelines of PrimeSafe, which is the statutory authority responsible for regulating the slaughter of animals. It is our expectation that any businesses operate within the guidelines set by PrimeSafe and that all animals are treated appropriately.

The evidence globally is that a prohibition on sending horses to knackeries and abattoirs can open them to further undue suffering through unnecessary transport to like facilities within other jurisdictions and/or to operations that do not have the same regulatory scrutiny. It is on these welfare grounds that we have not sought to place a prohibition on the practice.

ENDS